

Executive Summary

Short-term Evaluation Results for the First 5 California *Kit for New Parents*

Since the fall of 2000, First 5 California Children and Families Commission has funded the Center for Community Wellness at the University of California, Berkeley to conduct an ongoing study of the early distribution of the *Kit for New Parents*.

The *Kit for New Parents* is a colorful box of parenting materials that includes:

- A set of six videos on (1) early childhood development, (2) child safety, (3) quality child care, (4) early literacy, (5) prenatal/child health and nutrition, and (6) child discipline¹
- Eight related brochures²
- A *Parents Guide* with links to telephone and Internet resources
- A cardboard baby book

As part of the on-going study, UCB conducted a quasi-experimental 6-to-9 week follow-up study of 462 mothers who received a *Kit* and a group of 1,011 mothers who did not receive a *Kit*.

The results from the 6-to-9 week follow-up period show:

- ◆ Use of and satisfaction with the *Kit* were universally high—88% of mothers and 52% of their partners had used the *Kit* during that period.
- ◆ Mothers were more likely to use the materials if their partners had used the *Kit*. (98% of those mothers used the *Kit* versus 77% of other mothers.)
- ◆ Almost all mothers who used the *Kit* said they were likely to use it again and thought the *Kit* should be given to all parents in California.
- ◆ In the 6-to-9 weeks since they received a *Kit*, about half of the mothers said they had changed their thinking and/or behavior as a result of the *Kit*.
- ◆ During the 6-to-9 week period, there was a 10-point difference in knowledge gains favoring mothers who received a *Kit* versus mothers who did not receive a *Kit*. These gains were related to a knowledge scale that focused on eight parenting issues:
 1. Safe sleeping position
 2. Best way to feed a 2-month old
 3. Best age to start solid foods
 4. How infants learn best
 5. When to start reading to children
 6. Finding resources for quitting smoking
 7. Finding resources for child care
 8. Finding resources for free or low-cost medical care for babies
- ◆ At the beginning of the 6-to-9 week period, pregnant women and Spanish speakers had lower initial knowledge scale scores. However during that period, women who received a *Kit* while pregnant and Spanish speakers made greater knowledge gains related to *Kit* use.
- ◆ The *Kit for New Parents* compares very favorably with other educational programs designed to increase parenting knowledge and outcomes. (The effect size of the *Kit* was .48—more than double the .23 average effect size of other parenting education programs.)

Summary Recommendations

- The *Kit* should be distributed in a wide range of venues to ensure that all families, including those that are traditionally under-served, have the opportunity to receive a *Kit*.
- Every effort should be made to include fathers in the program. They benefited from the *Kit* and the benefit of their involvement extended to the mother.
- Because the *Kit* was especially effective with Spanish speakers, *Kit* materials should be culturally adapted into other languages for parents of different backgrounds.

¹ The video on child discipline was not included in the prototype *Kit* prepared for this study.

² The *Kit* for the study contained 13 brochures. That content was later consolidated into eight brochures.